



# EmployeeUPDATE

*Our Mission: To serve the people of North Carolina by enabling individuals, families and communities to be healthy and secure, and to achieve social and economic well-being.*

A monthly publication for employees of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

## Returned safely from Iraq

# Reservist honors boss, coworkers

Reservist Michon Beckwith left behind her friends and coworkers at the State Center for Health Statistics in February 2003 to pull a tour of duty in Iraq. After 17 months of deployment that included duty in Baghdad as a sergeant with the Raleigh-based 805<sup>th</sup> Military Police Company, she returned to the State Center, and to her old job.

Now, with her encouragement, the Department of Defense is recognizing the State Center for its exemplary support to employees who serve in the military reserve forces.

"They went above and beyond as far as keeping my job for me," said Beckwith, a 1992 graduate of North Johnston High School and a 1996 graduate of Shaw University.

Beckwith was supervisor of interviewers for behavior, risk factor, surveillance system with the center.

So Beckwith had an opportunity on Valentine's Day to thank her coworkers during the State Center's annual

international luncheon. The whole work section and the state health director turned out as Beckwith presented an "Above and Beyond" certificate to the director of the State Center, Gustavo Fernandez. The certificate now hangs in the Cotton Building.



Michon Beckwith presents award to Gustavo Fernandez.

Fernandez said he and his section are honored, "because only 10 percent of the employers in North Carolina received this award, so it is a select group that contributed to the people serving in the Armed Forces. We are proud of that."

The certificate reads: Employer Support of the Guard and Reserves presents this Above and Beyond Award to the State Center for Health Statistics, presented on behalf of the men and women of the National Guard and Reserve forces, for outstanding service

and continuing support to the national defense.

Beckwith praised her work section. "I will never forget how SCHS encouraged and helped me along the way during my most challenging times," she said.

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## Jalil Isa

### *¡Salud y Saludos!*

If you watch Univision 40, the Spanish-language network affiliate visible throughout the Triangle, you may catch a new series of commercials produced by the North Carolina Healthy Start Foundation.

The foundation's Gloria Sanchez and with Kimberly Sauls of Women's and Children's Health Section of the Division of Public Health, spearheaded the campaign. Yours truly is one of the impromptu actors on these commercials. Their aim is to raise awareness about the value of a medical home.

Now while this may seem like a logical choice – that if you're going to take your child to the doctor, you should make an effort to continue seeing the same doctor – circumstances sometimes get in the way of making this a reality. It is something that affects families of various ethnic backgrounds, including Hispanic households.

The reasons are many: sometimes there isn't enough money to visit a private doctor, in which case a visit to a local community health clinic or even worse, an emergency room, may be the order of the day. Other times, a family may move and be inclined to see another doctor that perhaps lives closer to their new home.

But the concept of a medical home is still foreign to many people. They may not realize the benefits of having a doctor that is close to the family and is able to learn the particular characteristics of each of the individual family members. In this day and age of doctor visits that don't last more than a few minutes, it's especially important to make the most of the time spent consulting with your physician. The less he or she has to learn about your child, the more productive the visit will be.

This is often a difficult task when you consider the lack of health insurance that is so prevalent among so many Latinos. But Healthy Start also provides a toll-free number that allows callers to find out if their child

qualifies for a state health insurance program – Medicaid or Health Choice.

Representatives at Univision 40 have also been helpful in providing us a channel to disseminate much needed information to the area's Spanish-speaking residents. I was asked to participate during the taping of some of these spots. I gladly responded to the opportunity. We have tried hard to get as much information out to the public – specifically the Hispanic community. I hope to be able to count on these wonderful resources to help continue spreading much needed information about health to all sectors of the population.

On another topic, another February is behind us. So that means another "NBC17 Health & Fitness Festival" also is past. This year DHHS had a smaller booth and managed to cover just about every inch of the table with informative materials to hand out to the more than 36,000 people who showed up at the free event.

One thing that stood out this year was the level of cooperation from all across DHHS. In past years, garnering interest in this event proved to be a bit of a challenge. This year was dramatically different. I received offers from nearly a dozen individuals from various divisions who were willing to volunteer during the event. That far surpasses the support I've received in the past. In fact, one of the biggest challenges in preparing for this year's Health Festival was sorting through all the volunteers. I never expected to have to turn people away – and the only reason I was forced to do that was due to the shortage of space at our booth. Our booth this year allowed space for only two to three people at a time.

But we made it work. We had materials from the Office of Citizen Services, the Division of Aging and Adult Services, the Division of Public Health's Oral Health and Injury Prevention sections, the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services, and more. In addition, the Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing operated its own booth. It is this level of support that helped us have an even better booth than in previous years. Not to mention this is the spirit I like to see in our staff. We shouldn't forget that our ultimate goal is to serve and help our clients every chance we get. I'm proud to see how this was reflected at this year's NBC17 Health Fest. Now rest up...only 11 more months 'til the next one. ■

*Jalil*

# Screenings a success; some referred to doctors

A pay-as-you-go health screening effort spearheaded by DHHS Human Resources, Employee Safety and Benefits Section is paying off.

Of 95 employees screened in Raleigh Jan. 25-26, three were immediately referred to doctors with identified life-threatening ailments. Several others discovered less severe problems that require medical attention and possible modifications of diet, medication and exercise.

The screenings include checking for problems with carotid and peripheral arteries, thyroid gland, gallbladder, kidneys, spleen, pancreas, blood pressure, bone density, cholesterol and blood sugar levels, and liver function. Screenings earlier this year found three employees with severely high blood pressure, one with an abnormal abdominal mass. Of 50 screened for cholesterol, 34 were found to have abnormal lipids.

“This is part of our offering to help our employees maintain the best health possible during their careers in state government,” said Kathy Gruer, Human Resources Division director. “Those who learn of problems or potential problems are advised to seek appropriate medical care or treatment.

“We’re happy to see that this screening has helped employees. We are looking to offer this to our employees in Butner, Morganton and in the Kinston-Goldsboro areas this spring, and we are planning to offer it again in Raleigh next fall.”

Fees range from \$19 to \$39 per screening. Costs for screenings may be drawn from NC Flex Health Care Spending accounts. The screenings are performed by Ultrascreen, a North Carolina-based company. ■

## Reservist, continued from page 1

During her deployment, she stayed in touch with several coworkers via email, and several pooled together to send her a CD player.

In Iraq, Beckwith’s duties ran the gamut for providing security to convoys and encampments of military personnel, to protecting military personnel in civilian settings.

She traveled Feb. 5 to Concord with her night time supervisor, Virginia King, to pick up the award to present to her work section. She received the award from the

North Carolina Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (NC ESGR). Her supervisor, Ziya Gizlice, was not able to accompany her.

The National Committee of Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve was established in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve component members and their civilian employers, to assist in the resolution of conflicts arising from an employee’s military commitment, and to promote greater understanding of the importance of America’s National Guard and Reserve system to its military defense. ■

# DSDHH celebrates Black History Month

The Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing held two events to celebrate Black Deaf History.

The first was a staff luncheon on Feb. 7 with culinary delights from Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria and the U.S.A. This program also provided highlights of Black Deaf Achievers. On Feb. 22, a lively panel presentation, "Celebrating Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow," showcased a dynamic group of speakers of all ages.

Exploring the historical impact of segregated education, Mary Herring Wright, a native of Wallace and the author of "Sounds Like Home," Lillie Jones, a native of Fayetteville, and Roxie Clark another native of North Carolina, discussed their experiences attending Garner School for the Deaf. Despite an educational environment that did not encourage the pursuit of higher education, teach them about black history or connect them with their community, these ladies have each made outstanding contributions to their community. Mary Herring Wright's second book "Memories of World War II and Afterward" is scheduled to be released in March.

Stephanie Scott, deaf services specialist from the Wilson Regional Resource Center and a graduate of North Carolina School for the Deaf, spoke about the need for role models for black deaf and deaf-blind individuals. Valerie McMillan, interpreter support services consultant from the Wilson Regional Resource Center, spoke about growing up hearing in an all-deaf family. Her grandparents, parents and siblings are all deaf. Valerie

spoke about her culturally rich upbringing as well as the responsibility of being the communication facilitator for family members. Valerie's early experiences have given her the motivation to become a sign language interpreter and to encourage other children of deaf adults and minorities to become qualified interpreters.

From a community perspective, Pamela Lloyd, program administrator for the Telecommunications Access Program and former president of National Black Deaf Advocates (NBDA), spoke about the history, value, and goals of NBDA in reaching out to black deaf youth and families with black deaf children.

Carlos Martin, president of North Carolina Black Deaf Advocates (NCBDA), spoke about outreach to black deaf individuals in the state. Pat Stivland, communication access coordinator, spoke about cross-cultural interpreting issues and the challenges in recruiting interpreters of color as well as providing appropriate cultural competency training for all interpreters. Linda Carr, office assistant at the Wilmington Regional Resource Center, also contributed to the discussion.

Special thanks to committee members Linda Harrington, Lawrence Shockey, Amy Markin, and Jan Withers for helping coordinate these programs. ■



**Panelists detail experiences**

(Foreground, left to right) Valeria McMillan and Linda Carr listen to recollections of growing up deaf. Panelists (left to right) are Carlos Martin, Stephanie Scott, Lillie Jones, Mary Herring Wright and Roxie Clark.



# NCS D hosts 53rd Mason-Dixon roundball tournament

The North Carolina School for the Deaf in Morganton hosted the fifty-third Annual Mason-Dixon Boys' Basketball Tournament Jan. 27-29. The tournament participants included boys' basketball teams from 11 schools for the deaf from 10 southern states. Two of these schools are in North Carolina – North Carolina School for the Deaf in Morganton and Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf in Wilson.

Between opening ceremonies on Wednesday, Jan. 26, and the awards ceremony on Saturday night, Jan. 29, hundreds of NCS D alumni, staff, Booster Club members and community fans filled the newly-renovated Underhill Gymnasium for the single elimination with consolation bracket tournament. Five inches of snow and ice on Saturday did not dampen the enthusiasm or excitement.

Sandy Turner and Garrett Walker, both retired NCS D staff, and Ruth Jones, NCS D director of volunteer services, co-chaired the event, which is widely regarded as the biggest sports event among the schools for the deaf. The tournament attracted the interest and commitment of the entire NCS D staff. Almost every staff member assisted with support activities that included fund-raising; publicity; arranging for accommodations for several hundred visiting basketball players, cheerleaders, coaches and athletic directors; dietary services; scorekeeping; environmental services;

decorations; cheerleading competition; security; trouble shooting; and website management.

NCS D finished the tournament in fourth place of 11 schools. NCS D basketball player Cedric Bostic was named to the all-tournament team. ENCS D did not place in the tournament. Mississippi School for the Deaf took the championship for the fourth straight year. South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind took second place.

The cheerleading championship went to Louisiana School for the Deaf for the fourth year. The sportsmanship award went to Florida School for the Deaf and Blind.

The first Annual Mason-Dixon Basketball Tournament was held at the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind in Staunton, Va., in 1953. The First Annual Boys' Mason-Dixon Basketball Tournament Champions, the NCS D Bears from that championship team, received special recognition during half-time festivities on Saturday night. The tournament was dedicated in honor of Don Lee Hackney, former Kentucky School for the Deaf athletic director, and in memory of Barney Williamson, former ENCS D basketball coach. ■



## Ukraine doctors visit

Medical doctors visiting from the Ukraine spent some time in North Carolina recently reviewing systems for provision of medical care. Their exposure included a briefing conducted by the state Office of Emergency Medical Services, Wake Emergency Medical Services about paramedics and emergency medical technicians and their roles in local EMS systems. The group also was briefed regarding Specialty Care Transport Programs by WakeMed Hospital. The group took a look at an ambulance and a hospital-based medical transport. Here, Ed Browning, right, assistant chief of OEMS, answers questions.

# HIV/AIDS rally in Raleigh



About 300 marchers, led by the marching band from N.C. Central University, made their way along Lane and Jones streets in Raleigh on Feb. 7 to rally against AIDS in the African American community. The march was the first statewide event of its kind on National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. The theme: Get Educated, Get Involved and Get Tested. The march and rally were organized by the HIV/STD Prevention and Care Branch of the Division of Public Health. More than 25,000 citizens of North Carolina are living with HIV/AIDS, and 76 percent of them are African Americans.

## Adoption Profile

### Introducing Christian

Christian is a very social little boy who displays his recognition of familiar voices by smiling and laughing. He enjoys listening to music, having cartoons on the TV and playing with toys that he can manipulate. Christian also likes activities in his developmental day school. He tracks people with his eyes and clearly recognizes people he knows. Christian is able to move his wheelchair short distances and is working on weight-bearing exercises that will allow him to eventually use a walker. His strengths are his motivation to communicate using facial expressions and vocalizations.



*Christian*  
b. March 25, 1998

Christian receives occupational, speech and physical therapy once a week. Goals for him include working on sensory integration through diet, which involves stimulating him with different toys, feelings and sounds in the hope that he will get used to feeling a variety of textures while eating. Christian is also working on tracking with his eyes for 10 seconds, grasping and releasing objects on purpose and moving his wheelchair



without provocation. While emotional connection with Christian is slight, he is able to recognize people he likes and have positive relationships. He has shown to be comfortable in familiar settings.

### A Family for Christian

Christian can flourish in a family that would be involved in his therapy and accept a limited amount of emotional exchange. An adoptive family for Christian would need to be dedicated to him and his needs and work with him on an individual basis. He can be a very happy and loving child and his adoptive family will need to appreciate his strengths while working with him and his needs. (NC #001-2151)

For more information on this child or adoption and foster care, in general, call NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network toll free at 1-877-NCKIDS-1 (1-877-625-4371).